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# The MCA Advisory

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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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## Board Members

John W. Adams, President  
John Kraljevich, Vice President  
Barry D. Tayman, Secretary & Treasurer  
David T. Alexander  
Robert F. Fritsch  
David Menchell  
John Sallay  
Donald Scarinci

John W. Adams, Editor  
60 State Street, 12<sup>th</sup> floor  
Boston, MA 02109  
[jadams@ahh.com](mailto:jadams@ahh.com)

Barry Tayman, Secretary & Treasurer  
5424 Smooth Meadow Way  
Columbia, MD 21044  
[Btayman@cincast.net](mailto:Btayman@cincast.net)

David Boitnott, Webmaster  
[dboitnott@ncrr.com](mailto:dboitnott@ncrr.com)

website: [medalcollectors.org](http://medalcollectors.org)  
editor of Collectors' Guide, Dick Johnson  
([dick.johnson@snet.net](mailto:dick.johnson@snet.net))

Dues: \$20.00/year

## Our Calendar

1. 5/14 & 5/15/2004 – COAC to be held at the new location of the American Numismatic Society in downtown New York
2. 6/1/2004 – Kolbe/Stacks' auction of the John J. Ford, Jr. Library, Part I. Venue will be California.
3. 8/18-8/22/2004 – ANA Convention in Pittsburgh. Our meeting date is Thursday, August 19, 2004 at 3:00 p.m.

## The Stack Family Coinage of the Americas Conference

### Friday, May 14, 2004

**6:30 pm** – Reception and Opening Lecture at 140 William St. (free of charge) Lecture by John W. Adams and Anne Bentley: "An International Survey of Comitia Americana Medals"

**8:00pm** - Dinner to follow at Fraunces Tavern, 54 Pearl Street (corner of Broad and Pearl) - \$40 per person.

### Saturday, May 15, 2004

Overall fee for conference and lunch \$35.  
140 William Street



8:00 am – Coffee

9:00 – David Menchell: "Betts Medals Not Included in his Canon"

Robert W. Hoge: "A Survey of the Betts series of Medals in the Collection of the American Numismatic Society"

Vicken Yegparian: "The King's College (Columbia University) Medal 1760"

David T. Alexander: "The Enigmatic John Stewart Comitia Americana Medal"

12:30pm - Buffet Lunch

1:30pm - Eric Goldstein: "Exonumia of the British Armed Forces, 1740-1780"

Richard Margolis: "Benjamin Franklin in Terra Cotta, Portrait Medallions by Jean-Baptiste Nini and Jean Martin Renaud"

John Kraljevic: "Thomas Jefferson, Medal Collector"

D. Wayne Johnson: "How Many Betts Medals are America American?"

The 2004 Stack Family COAC will take place at our new building at 140 William Street (at Fulton) Parking is available at William St./Beekman St. (two blocks north of Fulton). By subway, take the 2,3,4,5,A,C to the Broadway-Nassau St./Fulton stop.

To reserve for opening lecture, dinner and conference, please contact Juliette Pelletier at 212-234-3130 x230 or [pelletier@numismatics.org](mailto:pelletier@numismatics.org) by May 12, 2004.

## From the Editor

Barry Tayman has agreed to become our Treasurer in addition to his duties as Secretary. This is not only good news *per se* but it fills the last gap in our organization. We are truly up and running.

Now all we need is broader participation from our membership. You did a good job returning the blue-colored interest lists—These will be summarized in our next issue.

Gerry Muhl suggests more in the way of topical inputs, specifically: 1) new issues from the U.S. Mint; 2) new issues from world mints; 3) new issues from private mints; 4) upcoming auctions; 5) a members' Want List pages(s); 6) etc., How about some volunteers?

Speaking of volunteers, I have asked Dick Johnson to frame a request for volunteers. His Encyclopedia of Medal Making, now 95% complete, is a breathtakingly ambitious project. From the two sections I have read, Dick's work is a true classic. If we can help Dick carry the Encyclopedia forward to completion, it will be the foundation of medal collecting for generations to come. It is that good, so stay tuned. (John W. Adams)

## How to find what you Really Want on eBay?

Take the time to learn eBay's advanced search engine tools - they are not that difficult to master and can make finding what you are looking for much quicker with a lot less "garbage" to sort through. For example, say you want to find medals commemorating the Apollo 11 or is it the Apollo XI lunar mission. See the first problem, if you search on "Apollo 11" you will not find any of the "Apollo XI" listings. In addition you will find all kinds of other stuff - stamps, postcards, on and on goes the list. Using advanced search techniques like those



illustrated in the search string below can eliminate these and many other problems.

In eBay's search criteria box enter:  
 Apollo +(11,XI) -  
 (ancient,Eisenhower,Anthony)  
 +(coin,medal,token,paperweight)  
 Click "Search Title and description", run it and you will get a shorter list with 95% or better relevancy. But what does all this mean in plain English you ask? The chart below will explain

Command<?xml:namespace prefix = 0 ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office:/>	Read as	Explanation
Apollo	Find the string "Apollo"	Basic search that finds all references to "Apollo"
+(11,XI)	Include the strings "11" or "XI"	Narrows the above findings to only those also containing 11 in either Arabic or Roman numerals
ancient,Eisenhower,Anthony	Excludes the strings "ancient", "Eisenhower" and "Anthony"	Further narrows the results of the first two steps by removing any listing containing one or more of these strings. We don't care about ancient coins, like our SBA dollars.
+(coin,medal,token,paperweight)	Include the strings coin, "medal", "token" and "paperweight"	Further narrows the Results to include only Listings that have one or more of these strings too.

One other technique not illustrated above is the use of quotes. A search for New York will find all listings containing new and york but searching for "New York" will only find those containing New<space>York. Also, searches are not case sensitive so it does not matter if you capitalize or not.

I also bet the inclusion of paperweights in the above search has you scratching your head. Well face it, on eBay you find the neatest stuff in the most unusual places. I once purchased a medal worth upwards of \$250 for only \$9.95 on eBay because it was listed under "Office Supplies," described as a paperweight and I was the only bidder. That's why I always search all of eBay and not just the "Coins" section. It may take a little longer for the results to come back but many times you are handsomely rewarded. One last suggestion that I've had some success with is searching using common misspellings of keywords.

The example search string has been tested and does work. Play around with it. Try it by typing it in one step at a time and you'll quickly see how it zeros in on your target. Try substituting in other topics, other inclusions and other exclusions for medals you're interested in and before you know it you'll be a searching expert. And don't forget when you get a search string that works save it either in eBay's "My eBay" or your browser's Favorites and use it again and again over time. (David W. Boitnott)

## James Ross Snowden, An Early leader in Numismatics

He was born 9 December 1809 in Chester, PA, the son of Sarah G. Snowden and the Reverend Nathaniel R. Snowden, curator of Dickinson College. He was a brilliant student during his academic years and after completing his law studies at Dickinson College he was admitted to the Bar as an attorney in 1830 at the age of 21. He served in the



State Militia for 15 years until being appointed a Colonel of a local regiment and presiding over the State Convention in 1845. He practiced law in Franklin, Venango County, PA and served as County District Attorney. He also served in the State legislature as speaker of the House. He served two terms as Pennsylvania State Treasurer. In 1848 he was appointed Treasurer, U.S. Mint and Assistant United States Treasurer. He married Susan E. Patterson in that year and they subsequently had five children.

In 1853 Snowden was appointed Director of the U.S. mint at Philadelphia. Early in his tenure, he advocated production of "a lighter and more convenient coin" to replace the cumbersome cent then in use. The Act of February 21, 1857 authorized a reduction in the size of the cent and changed the alloy to copper-nickel and also ended the coinage of the half-cent. In another innovation, Snowden stipulated that the Director's annual report be made to the Secretary of the Treasury on a fiscal year basis instead of the previous calendar year basis so that the information could appear in his annual financial report to Congress.

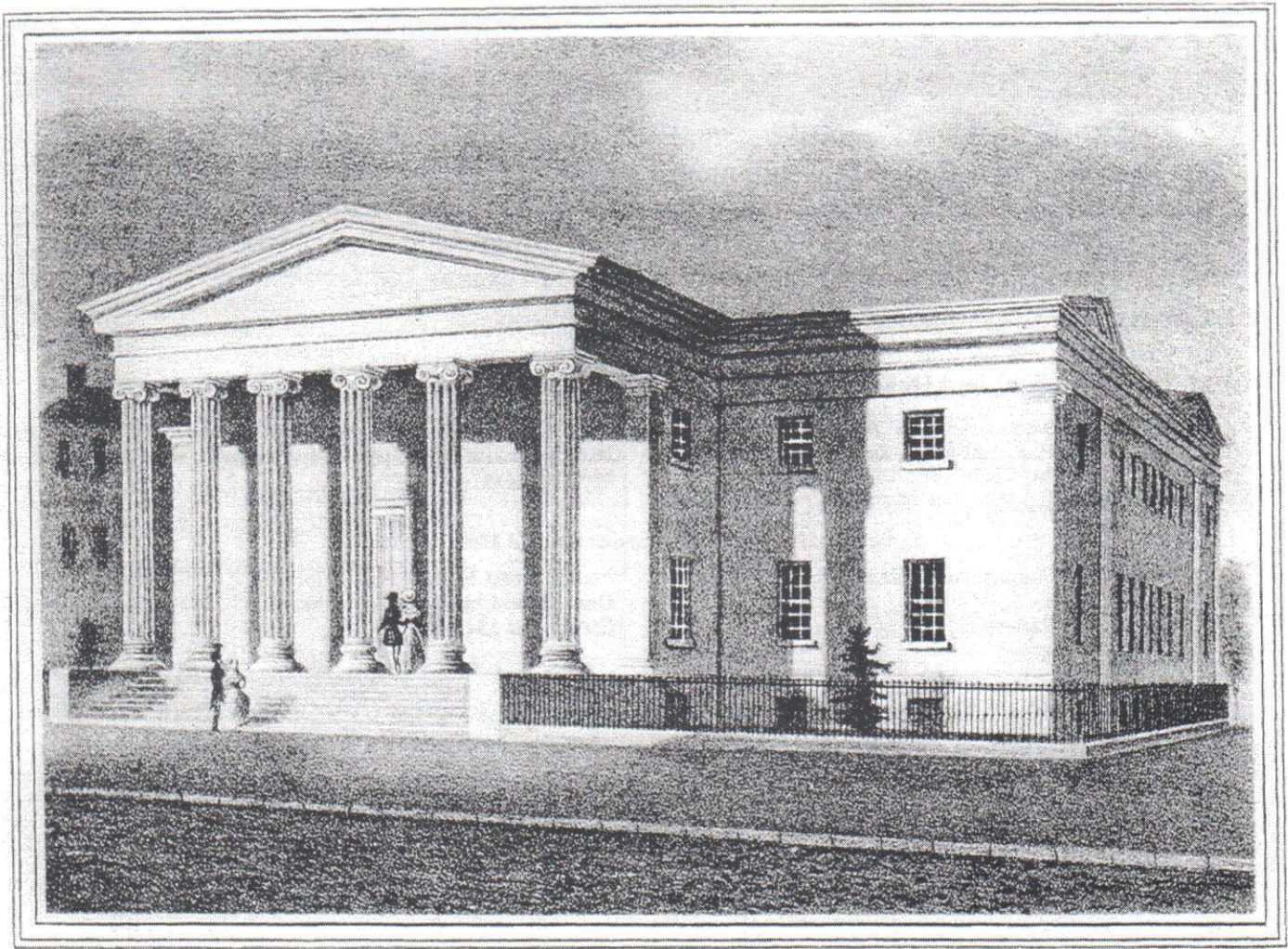
The mint building was remodeled and made fireproof during Snowden's tenure. A Medals Department was formally established at the Philadelphia Mint in 1855, through which medals of national historical interest have been manufactured and sold to the public for over a hundred and forty years. To Snowden also is given the credit for first use of the term "PROOF COINS," to designate special collectors pieces. He

was responsible for the first mintage of U.S. nickel coins along with the copper-nickel cent as a result of the congressional authorization act of 21 February 1867.

In 1859 Anthony C. Paquet designed the Appreciation Medal for Snowden. Mint records indicate that only 23 of the 80mm medals were struck in Bronze and 2 struck in White Metal at the direction of Congress. None were struck in any other medium and in 1859 Snowden, due to his interest in Medallion Art and Washington Commemorative Medals in particular, established "The Washington Cabinet of Medals" in which he exhibited a variety of Washington Medals and other Historical Medals commemorating people, places and events relating to U.S. History. To aid in his quest for specimens to be placed in the cabinet, he had the Mint engraver, Anthony C. Paquet, who subsequently designed the rare 1861 Coronet \$20 Gold Double Eagle, design a 21.3mm Commencement of the Cabinet Medalet with the bust of Washington in civilian dress on the obverse and an inscription on the reverse, "A MEMORIAL OF THE WASHINGTON CABINET MAY 1859" within a wreath of olive branches. There were 10 struck in Gold, 510 in Silver, 50 in Brilliant Bronze on thin planchets and 200 on Bronzed-copper thick planchets. He traded these for Medals to be displayed in his Cabinet of Medals.

In 1860 having dispensed nearly all the small medalets he decided that a larger Medal would be more appropriate to commemorate his cabinet. So, he again called on Paquet to design such a Medal. The result was the striking of the





Engraved by J. L. Wild.

Engraved by J. L. Wild & Co. at No. 72 Dock St. Phila.

*United States Mint at Philadelphia opened in 1833*



**JAMES ROSS SNOWDEN, NINTH DIRECTOR U.S. MINT.**  
(June, 1853 - April 1861)



# JAMES ROSS SNOWDEN

Director of the Mint  
June 1853 to April 1861



OBV. Presented to James Ross Snowden, Director of the Mint, by his personal friends as a mark of regard for him as an officer and their esteem for him as a citizen. Bust of Mr. Snowden.



REV. The Mint of the United States of America, Philadelphia. Front view of the building. Built 1832, Rendered Fireproof 1856.

By Anthony Paquet.



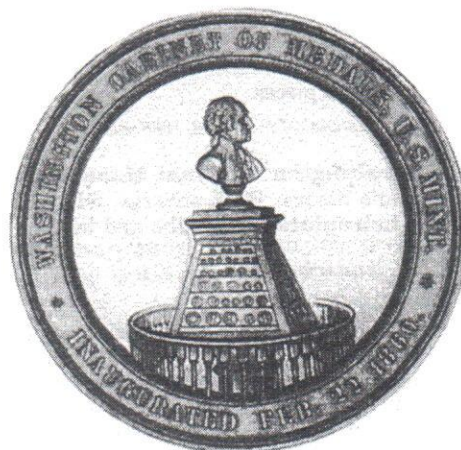
OBV. Bust of Washington in civilian dress. Legend: PATER PATRIAE.

REV. A MEMORIAL OF THE WASHINGTON CABINET MAY 1859, within a wreath of olive branches.



Engraved by Anthony Paquet from portrait attributed to Gilbert Stuart.

## CHOICE 1860 WASHINGTON MINT CABINET MEDAL





59.7mm Dedication Medal, of which there was 1 struck in Gold with 112 struck in Silver and 201 struck in Bronze. The obverse depicts the undraped bust of George Washington facing right in a sunken field surrounded by a raised border with the legend, "GEORGE WASHINGTON \* BORN FEB. 22 1732.\* DIED DEC. 14 1799" in the round. The reverse shows the Washington Cabinet of Medals, in the form of a four sided glass case, trapezoidal in outline, surmounted by a copy of the bust of Washington in civilian dress by M. Houdon with details of many of the individual medals available. In the round is the legend "WASHINGTON CABINET OF MEDALS, .S. Mint, \* INAUGURATED FEB. 22 1860." These medals are prized by collectors of Medallic Art.

In 1861 his deep and abiding interest in Washingtonia prompted him to write and publish one of the first standard numismatic reference books on the subject titled, "The Washington and National Medals consisting of 210 pages and illustrated by seventy nine facsimile engravings of some of the medals in the cabinet of the U.S. Mint. Prior to his book on medals he had written and had published in 1860 his book titled, "A Description of Ancient and Modern Coins in the Cabinet Collection of the Mint of the United States" consisting of 412 pages and 27 finely embossed plates illustrating many of the coins.

Snowden resigned as Director of the Mint in April of 1861 to accept an appointment to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, a position he held for the next 12 years. He then returned to the

practice of law, but continued to contribute to publications numerous articles on coins and the U.S. monetary system instead of the previous calendar year basis system, many of which were excerpted from his two books. He died on 21 March 1878.

James Ross Snowden is still acclaimed today as one of the most innovative and creative directors of the mint to have held that office. His establishment of the National Medals and Proof Coin programs, which are still in effect today, were among his most creative ideas. (Theodore O. McCann)

**Heraldic Art Medal Series**  
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**D. WAYNE JOHNSON, EDITOR**  
**COLLECTOR'S GUIDES AND**  
**CHECKLISTS SECTION**

IMAGINE building a mint in your basement – in modern urban Cleveland Ohio – to coin objects like half dollars because the United States Mint stopped making commemorative halves. That's exactly what Robert McNamara did. A marketing and advertising man, he saw this as a business opportunity in the mid 1950s.

The U.S. Treasury had not authorized any new commemorative half dollars since the last Booker T. Washingtons were struck in 1954. "Wasn't there a pent-up demand for new commemoratives since then by coin collectors?" he thought.

A lifelong collector of ancient coins and decorations, McNamara had such a burning interest in how these were



made, he build his own screw press in a workshop in the basement of his Shaker Heights home. He predicted he could strike these new "coins" using that screw press.

So he went about acquiring a complete mint, piece by piece, creating not only his own active mint but a new business he named "Heraldic Art" (based on a previous business selling heraldic coats of arms). He bought engraving and stamping equipment as far from Cleveland as Pforzheim Germany. And he taught himself how to use it all. He was a genuine 20th century renaissance man to accomplish all this.

The first three issues were struck on that screw press. Then he realized it was a physical chore to do that much striking on it. It was work to swing that balancing arm for each impression! So he acquired a large electric-powered press. However, it wouldn't fit in the basement, so he relegated it first to a rented building, then to his garage. But the engraving machines, casting equipment and metal stock for dies and "coins" had been shunted down twisting stairs to a long unused section of his basement.

For designs he hit the books in his second-floor library. Then contacted the best bas-relief sculptor in Cleveland, Walter A. Sinz. "Walter," he said, "let's start with the two biggest events in the news -- admitting Alaska and Hawaii to the Union. I want you to create for me a pair of half-dollar models from my designs for these two new states."

By mid 1959 he had his first medal in imitation of a commemorative

half dollar struck (after teaching himself every step from design to die making to delivery!). And he started promoting them to collectors. He planned a new coin every four months. (He didn't dare call them what they really were--medals-- but used the euphemistic medallions.") His third medal that first year was in honor of Saint Lawrence Seaway.

Then he received a visit -- from the Secret Service! He never knew who complained, or who turned him in, but his "coins" were too close to Uncle Sam's coins: Exact same diameter and thickness. Close to the same weight but a little higher amount of silver (.925 sterling versus .900 fine from the Mint).

He had committed the worst sin. He had created slugs. Half dollar slugs! Despite the fact his silver was better than what was in circulation and he was charging nearly three dollars for his commemoratives -- and no collector was ever going to place one of his creations in a vending machine or fare box! -- in autumn 1959 he received a cease and desist order from the SS.

Not to be outdone, he theorized that if he altered the planchets somewhat, even just a little, he could get around the United States Slug Laws. His decision was to blank slightly thicker sterling silver stock. Make the medals a fraction of a millimeter thicker.

Since he had already mailed out all the first issue of Alaska medals he couldn't change those. And he was half way through striking the Hawaiis and the Saint Lawrence Seaways. But to stay



in business he changed the thickness (and increased the issue price slightly).

So the government had forced him to create two varieties of his 1959 issues. All later medals after this first year were struck in thicker blanks. The Secret Service never bothered him again.

Robert Turner McNamara (he used a middle initial "T" to differentiate from Robert S. McNamara, defense secretary under Kennedy) went on for twenty years creating his "half dollar commemoratives." He struck other medals as well – he called these his "occasional pieces"-- these honored people, space, American Bicentennial and coin clubs. When the national numismatic show came to Cleveland in 1964 he even designed the ANA convention medal -- struck by Medallic Art Co in New York.

(I knew Bob for over 25 years, meeting him often at ANA conventions. But when I learned he wanted to sell off his mint equipment, I contacted him. I bought his two engraving machines, an engravers' ball, and lots of other stuff, much of which I still have as I write this. Yes! I have an engraving machine in my coin and medal technology collection! – DWJ)

About the medals in series. The medals were themes from history; McNamara's criteria was "if the Mint had made commemorative halves this year, what would be the three best subjects?" This makes a handsome and varied collection. He had set a limit for each issue of 6,000 pieces, no more. (That was the maximum amount of work he

wanted to do for any issue, he once revealed to me.)

The pieces were serially numbered, but not on the medals! He serially numbered 1 to 6,000 on brightly colored 2x2 envelopes. This aided supplying people who subscribed for a certain serial number (but may have been tardy in paying!) -- a medal could be inserted in the previously numbered envelope and sent out anytime. However, these envelopes have mostly been separated from medals over the years. His leaflets announced the next three issues and a brief text of the current medal.

He numbered each thrice-a-year issue in Roman numerals (these are listed below with Arabic equivalent). He gradually increased his issue price, from under three dollars to \$3.50 midway to \$6.25 each at the end. Even so, Robert McNamara held to the concept of issue price close to what past commemorative half dollars had sold for originally. He became the only person in American to strike his own "commemorative half dollars" for twenty years.